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The University of Southern Mississippi

A COMPARISON OF THE RHETORICAL MODES OF PERSUASION USED BY
CHURCHES IN THE PROSELYTIZATION OF PEOPLES OF LOWER ECONOMIC
STATUS IN SOUTH MISSISSIPPI

by

Blake Houston

A Thesis
Submitted to the Honors College of
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Approved by

John Meyer, Ph.D., Thesis Adviser
Professor of Communication Studies

Charles Tardy, Ph.D., Chair
Department of Communication Studies

Ellen Weinauer, Ph.D., Dean
Honors College

Abstract

This study provides insight into the persuasion techniques used by churches in the Southern Baptist Convention, as well as the reactions of people of lower economic status to the persuasion techniques. Furthermore, this study provides a unique look at rhetorical persuasion strategies used by a religious organization. Results of this study indicate that church members relied on its own credibility, logical and emotional appeals to need, and appeals to humor to influence, it turned out, a person of lower economic status' acceptance of persuasion via a peripheral route and being positively affected by the church's credibility. The findings also suggest that Source Credibility Theory and the Elaboration Likelihood Model are major components in the acceptance of persuasion by people of lower economic status. The results of this study provide theoretical insight into our understanding of church persuasion techniques as a whole and strengthen the credibility of practical persuasion tactics that, paired with other factors, could lead other churches to success in proselytization of people of lower economic status.

Key Words: church, persuasion, Elaboration Likelihood Model, Source Credibility

Theory, low income, Southern Baptist Convention, rhetorical modes of persuasion

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Introduction

“And Jesus said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age’” (Matthew 28:18-20, English Standard Version). These words, uttered by perhaps the most influential man that ever walked the planet Earth, created in themselves the very essence of what the mission of the modern day Church is to be (Atland, 1980). Through the centuries that followed, the Church has hailed these words by Jesus Christ as the cornerstone for which it basis its missions. Early Church leaders’ letters, the Crusades, the Protestant Reformation, all of these events occurred with a common goal in mind: the proselytization of all peoples to the religion of Christianity (Spitz, 1984).

Rhetoric has long been accepted as the most effective way to diffuse information via persuasion attempts (Rorty, 1996). The use of rhetoric is universal in its approach to any person, no matter what his or her situation, background, or ethnicity may be. For this reason, the Church’s main method for proselytizing diverse people has always been the use of rhetorical appeals. From the letters of Paul in the New Testament to the sermons given by Billy Graham in overcrowded football stadiums, rhetorical appeals have saturated dialogue used by Church leaders for centuries (Atland, 1980).

Many studies have been conducted to determine the role of rhetoric in the proselytization efforts of the Church as a whole (the term “Church” here will be used to describe people who claim the religion of Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant). Experts all over the world have dissected texts from every era in the Christian religion in

order to determine what rhetorical techniques were implemented to proselytize the audience (Kell & Camp, 1999).

Historically, the Church has also associated itself with social outcasts, orphans, widows, and people of lower economic status (Batey, 1972). In the same manner, studies have been conducted to find out what rhetorical techniques are used to proselytize people of each of the categories mentioned above (Kell & Camp, 1999).

In Mississippi, the Church and impoverished people collide with one another each and every day (Ownby, 1999). The combination of both of these factors in this state creates a rare opportunity to study a phenomenon that has not received much attention by scholars. Very little research has been done on how people of lower economic strata react to the rhetorical methods used by the Church, and more specifically in this study, the Southern Baptist Convention, to proselytize them.

The purpose of this study is to provide a qualitative analysis of how churches affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention in South Mississippi use rhetorical techniques to proselytize people of lower economic strata and also to examine how impoverished people in South Mississippi react to the rhetoric used in the proselytization efforts of those churches. This analysis is enabled through the lenses of the social judgment theory, elaboration likelihood model, and source credibility theory. Effective analysis of this topic will enable churches in the Southern Baptist Convention in South Mississippi to better proselytize people of lower economic status in this region. With more accurate knowledge of the types of techniques used by Southern Baptist churches in South Mississippi, along with a closer look at how people who fall under the poverty line in Mississippi receive the proselytization efforts of churches, pastors across South

Mississippi will gain insight that will help them be able to make adjustments to their current methods of proselytization in order to create a more enticing manner for proselytizing people of lower economic status in South Mississippi.

Literature Review

Rhetorical Modes of Persuasion

The rhetorical modes of persuasion, better known as ethos, logos, and pathos, are the foundations by which people persuade an audience. Aristotle created these three words in his book, “On Rhetoric.”

According to Aristotle, what an audience thinks of the character of an orator or a writer influences how believable or convincing the argument of the person is. This perceived character is called the speaker or writer's ethos (1991). An audience is, by nature, more likely to be persuaded by a person who is friendly, considerate of others, and has a good mind that absorbs knowledge easily (Aristotle, 1991). On many occasions, an audience knows about the character of a speaker or writer before the time of the actual event occurs. This is known as a person's extrinsic ethos, or what we refer to today as a person's reputation (Aristotle, 1991). A speaker can earn a good reputation with an audience through previous speaking engagements, experiences, and knowledge. However, the audience's knowledge of the speaker before the actual event and the information that they are presented, either in written or spoken form, is what gives the audience an impression of the author's character. This audience's conclusion about a speaker's credibility that they receive from the message itself is the intrinsic ethos (Aristotle, 1991).

Institutions (such as churches), public roles (like governors and presidents) and publications (such as TIME magazine) also project an ethos or credibility (Rorty, 1996). People assume, for example, that *The Washington Post* is a more credible source than the *National Inquirer*. In most cases, an audience believes that a person who has a high

position of responsibility is more credible than someone who has no honors or titles.

Whenever a speaker or writer uses credibility and ethos in his or her speech or writing, they are better able to persuade the audience (Rorty, 1996).

Pathos, another rhetorical mode of persuasion, appeals to the listener's emotions, identity, and self-interest. Many rhetoricians over the centuries have considered pathos the strongest of the appeals, though this view of persuasion is rarely mentioned without also discussing the power of emotion to change someone's mind (Aristotle, 1991).

Appeals to a person's sense of identity and self-interest exploit common biases; he or she naturally bends in the direction of what will make him or her better, what serves his or her interests or the interests of any group he or she believes to be a part of (Rorty, 1996). Even when advantage is not an issue, writers who belong to groups an audience identifies with, or create groups they can belong to, often seem more compelling. People also naturally find more persuasive the speaker or writer who flatters instead of insults (Rorty, 1996). Thus, skillful writers create a positive image in their words of the audience they are addressing, an image their actual readers can identify with. Devices that create an identity between the writer and reader so that the speaker almost seems to be the audience addressing itself are especially powerful (Aristotle, 1991).

An audience's emotions also strongly assist, and perhaps sometimes determine, persuasion (Rorty, 1996). If, for example, a writer wants a reader to evaluate something negatively, she or he may try to arouse the reader's anger. Or, to produce action to someone's benefit (e.g. to persuade us to make a charitable donation), an arguer may work on our pity (Rorty, 1996).

Direct appeals to the reader to feel an emotion (e.g. "You should be crying now")

are rarely effective. Instead, creating an emotion with words usually requires recreating the scene or event that would normally arouse the emotion (Aristotle, 1991). Thus, descriptions of painful or pleasant things work on the emotions. The arguer can work on the natural trigger of the emotion. If, for example, a person usually feels anger at someone who, he or she believes, has received benefits without deserving them, then the arguer who wants to make him or her angry with someone will make a case that person was rewarded unfairly (Rorty, 1996).

Logos, the third and final rhetorical mode of persuasion, is the argument of the speech or writing itself and the explicit reasons the arguer provides to support a position (Aristotle, 1991). Many ways to describe the support provided in an argument are available, but the most common way to begin is to consider all the premises the author seems to supply. These can be scattered throughout the argument and expressed indirectly, so identifying premises is a judgment call in itself (Aristotle, 1991).

Next, an audience must ask which of the premises are presented as objects of agreement that the arguer considers as given, elements of the argument taken for granted. Objects of agreement are basically either facts or values (Aristotle, 1991). Of course, the facts may not be facts and readers may not agree with the values assumed. Some of the premises will be supported further, but basically every argument has got to come down to certain objects of agreement that it presents as shared between arguer and audience (Rorty, 1996).

Social Judgment Theory

Social judgment theory seeks to explain how an audience processes messages. The new information is compared to existing beliefs and a decision to accept or reject the

information is made. The beginnings of social judgment theory can be traced to early experiments on attitude and persuasion in social psychology, but it was first given its foundations with the work of Muzafer Sherif and Carl Hovland in 1961. Sherif is considered one of the founders of social psychology, and is recognized for his research on realistic conflict theory. His most prominent experiment was the Robber's Cave experiment, in which he took groups of well-behaved boys to a camp and pitted the groups against one another through various challenges (Stock, 1999). Hovland is best known for his work on attitudes and social communication. Like many other early communication theorists, he worked with the U.S. War Department during World War II to study the effectiveness of persuasive films and audience resistance to those films.

Sherif and Hovland explored social judgment theory further in their 1961 book, *Social judgment: Assimilation and contrast effects in communication and attitude*. The development of the theory is what makes it unique, and why Sherif & Hovland's work is still cited in social judgment theory research today. This theory came about during a time in which, according to Carolyn Wood Sherif, "Communication researchers were becoming aware that degree of involvement is critical in practical problems of attitude change" (1981). Sherif and Hovland's research found people's attitudes "serve as judgmental anchors" upon which they assimilate or reject information presented to them (Eagly, 1992).

Social judgment theory claims that there are two internal elements present within each person that shapes how messages of persuasion are perceived. The first element is our "anchor points" or "attitudes" are internal references with which we compare the information that we process. These anchor points are always present and influence

decision-making. According to Hovland and Sherif, peoples' attitudes have certain characteristics that can help them accept or reject persuasion; stronger attitudes have more influence on the decision to accept or reject persuasion, attitudes can be positive or negative, not all attitudes have equal weight, attitudes are unique to each person and can vary greatly, making them difficult to predict, and behavior does not always reflect attitude.

The second element at play in social judgment theory is ego-involvement. In decision-making, the more personal investment a person has to an issue, the more ego-involved the person becomes. Ego is based on deeply held beliefs that are central to who people are, such as politics, religion, and relationships. Individuals with increased ego involvement are far less willing to accept a message. When combined, attitudes and ego involvement help shape our affiliation with others as we seek to associate with like-minded individuals. Users of Apple products are an example of a social assembly of similarly minded individuals. Due to this sense of belonging they are far less likely to accept an idea that goes against the accepted attitudes of the group. When the Android technology was introduced as a competitor of the iPhone, Apple fans were quick to dismiss and criticize its adoption. People tend to group attitudes and beliefs about particular issues, resulting in the formation of individual latitudes.

Latitudes are clusters of attitudes that determine how we will receive a message based on levels of commitment or sacrifice. Hovland and Sherif found three types of latitudes that form various attitudes. The first is the latitude of acceptance, which are options that are most likely to be welcomed or accepted. Second is the latitude of rejection, or options that are most contrasting with peoples' attitudes and are most likely

to be rejected. Last is the latitude of non-commitment, which encompasses options that people have neutral or no feelings toward.

Hovland and Sherif also identified two key behaviors to social judgment theory that occur mostly in more ego-involved individuals: assimilation and contrast.

Assimilation occurs when an idea is similar to a person's current attitudes and therefore the information is manipulated into being more alike than it may be in actuality.

Conversely, contrast occurs when an idea is present that is not similar to one's own and therefore distorted into seeming that there is a greater discrepancy present.

However, when a message falls almost perfectly into our latitudes, this concept is considered maximum influence. A message able to achieve maximum influence is thought to be one of the most persuasive messages.

Elaboration Likelihood Model

Petty and Cacioppo (1986a, 1986b) state that there are two "routes" to persuasion: central and peripheral. The central route to persuasion consists of thoughtful consideration of the arguments (ideas, content) of the message. When a receiver is doing central processing, he or she is being an active participant in the process of persuasion. Central processing has two prerequisites: it can only occur when the receiver has both the motivation and the ability to think about the message and its topic. If the listener doesn't care about the topic of the persuasive message, he or she will almost certainly lack the motivation to do central processing. On the other hand, if the listener is distracted or has trouble understanding the message, he or she will lack the ability to do central processing.

The peripheral route to persuasion occurs when the listener decides whether to agree with the message based on other cues besides the strength of the arguments or ideas

in the message. For example, a listener may decide to agree with a message because the source appears to be an expert or is attractive. The peripheral route also occurs when a listener is persuaded because he or she notices that a message has many arguments, but lacks the ability or motivation to think about them individually. In other words, peripheral cues, like source expertise (credibility) or many arguments in one message, are a short cut. People do not want to or cannot think carefully about the ideas in this persuasive message, but it is a fair gamble to go ahead and agree with the message if the source appears to be knowledgeable or if there are many arguments in support of the message. This route occurs when the listener is unable or unwilling to engage in much thought on the message. Receivers engaged in peripheral processing are more passive than those doing central processing.

Why does it matter which “route” an audience member takes when hearing or watching or reading a persuasive message? A key prediction of the Elaboration Likelihood Model is that attitudes that are changed through the central route to persuasion will have different effects from attitudes changed through the peripheral route. Petty and Cacioppo explain that “attitude changes that result mostly from processing issue-relevant arguments (central route) will show greater temporal persistence, greater prediction of behavior, and greater resistance to counter persuasion than attitude changes that result mostly from peripheral cues” (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986a). It should be obvious that these are important outcomes. Surely in most cases, persuaders would very much want to know how to make attitude change last longer, have a greater influence on behavior, and be more resistant to change. However, even though central processing has advantages, receivers do not always oblige us by having the motivation and ability to

think about the message. Researchers need to understand both of these processes of persuasion because both of them occur in receivers.

Several factors influence the kind of thoughts that receivers are likely to have. Given the Elaboration Likelihood Model's assumption that thoughts create persuasion, these factors must therefore influence attitude change. First, involvement and ability influence the amount of thoughts produced. The more a listener is involved in the topic, the more that topic has relevance and importance to the listener, the more motivation that listener will have to think about the message (Petty & Cacioppo, 1979). To the average person, this makes perfect sense: if a message is about a topic that matters to us, we have a reason (motivation) to pay attention to it and reflect on the ideas in that message. Of course, the less involvement the audience has in the topic, the less motivation they have to think about a message. However, motivation is not enough to guarantee that central processing will occur. Receivers must also have the ability to think about the message. If they are distracted, too tired, under the influence of drugs or alcohol, ill, etc., they will not be able to think carefully about a message. Furthermore, if a message is difficult to understand (full of unfamiliar terms, confusing, spoken too fast, or with a thick accent), central processing is unlikely.

However, having thoughts isn't enough for persuasion to occur. Thinking unfavorable thoughts or disagreeing with the message will not cause attitude change. One way to encourage favorable thoughts is to agree with your audience. For example, if an audience likes a particular presidential candidate, messages supporting that candidate are more likely to create favorable thoughts. Messages for a different candidate are more likely to create unfavorable thoughts. However, persuaders usually cannot switch their

topic to match the audience's likes. You are hired to persuade people to vote for one candidate.

Another factor that influences the kind of thoughts receivers have is argument quality or strength. Strong arguments have been consistently found to create more favorable thoughts, and fewer unfavorable thoughts, than weak arguments (Benoit, 1987; Petty & Cacioppo, 1984). Strong arguments, thus, have been found to be more persuasive than weak ones (Benoit, 1987; Cacioppo, Petty, & Morris, 1983; Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981). Furthermore, the influence of argument quality is greater on involving than uninvolved topics (Andrews & Shimp, 1990; Petty & Cacioppo, 1984). So, persuaders can increase the likelihood that an audience will have favorable thoughts by working hard to include strong, high quality arguments in persuasive messages.

Subjects exposed to a greater number of arguments should produce more favorable cognitive responses than subjects exposed to fewer arguments. Calder, Insko, and Yandell (1974) found that number of arguments influences cognitive responses. Furthermore, numerous studies have reported that messages with more arguments create more attitude change than those with fewer arguments (Calder, Insko, & Yandell, 1974; Chaiken, 1980; Petty & Cacioppo, 1984). Argument quantity, unlike argument quality or strength, is believed to be a peripheral cue. When receivers notice that a message has a large number of arguments, they have some tendency to accept the message.

Source Credibility Theory

While considerable thought may go into message content and delivery strategy, the content of a message is not the only aspect of communication efforts that determines whether or not an appeal will be deemed persuasive; in fact, the aspect of source

credibility can have a greater impact on audience perceptions of a sender than the content of a message itself. First explored by Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1953), the importance of source credibility is based on Aristotle's statement that ethos (i.e., credibility) is the most important aspect of persuasion (Stiff & Mongeau, 2003). Hovland et. al. (1953) explained source credibility as being composed of two dimensions: expertise and trustworthiness.

Expertise, sometimes referred to as "competence," refers to the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions. For example, a professional golfer would generally be deemed as being a more valid source of information on proper swing technique than someone who merely played a few times per year.

Trustworthiness, alternatively, is based on the degree of confidence that an audience member places in a message source's intent to communicate the assertions which he or she considers to be most valid. Deeming a source to be trustworthy basically means that the source is perceived to be honest (Hovland, Janis, & Kelly 1953). In essence, a highly trustworthy and/or expert source produces a more positive attitude toward the position than sources that are less trustworthy and/or specialized. The more credible a source, the more persuasive they will be deemed (Craig & McCann, 1978; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; McGinnies & Ward, 1980; Miller & Baseheart, 1969; Sternthal, Phillips, & Dholakia, 1978; Watts & McGuire, 1964).

While expertise and trustworthiness are the first and foremost of the accepted factors that determine source credibility, there has long been unease manifest within the communication literature with the notion of settling for the idea that there are no other attributes that determine perceived credibility (Berlo, Lemert, & Mertz, 1969;

McCroskey, 1966; Whitehead, 1968). Criticism has been raised within the literature for over-generalizing attributes and for other discrepancies in the research, showing just how much dissent exists regarding what dimensions truly embody credibility (Chronkhite & Liska, 1976). Because of some of the existing problems with source credibility's factors the current study will focus primarily on expertise and trustworthiness with the addition of one further factor which is specifically important in this study: goodwill.

Goodwill, called the “lost dimension of ethos / source credibility” by McCroskey and Teven (1999), is defined as intent toward a receiver or perceived caring. Goodwill has three sub-factors that contribute to fostering perceptions of its existence: understanding, empathy, and responsiveness. Understanding is defined as knowing another person's feelings, ideas and needs. Empathy means identifying with these understood feelings. Finally, responsiveness means acknowledging another person and their attempts to communicate (McCroskey, 1992; McCroskey & Teven, 1999). In the context of the present study, the ability of a Southern Baptist church in South Mississippi to convince people of lower economic status that it truly cares about their needs and spirituality depends upon its ability to show understanding and empathy. They must portray themselves as working for the good of all people in the area, not just those who have the most money or who give the biggest tithe. Because of the nature of spiritual and moral appeals and the specific sources (Southern Baptist churches in South Mississippi), goodwill will also be assessed to determine the significance of its contribution to perceptions of source credibility found in an audience.

The problem faced by persuasive communicators around the world is that source credibility is perception-based, sometimes varying from one audience to the next and

from receiver to receiver within each of these groups depending on a receiver's pre-conceived beliefs and experiences. Source credibility is defined as a perceptual state as opposed to an actual characteristic of message sources, meaning that message sources cannot possess credibility; only audiences can create perceptions of trustworthiness and expertise (Bettinghaus & Cody, 2004; Hovland, et al., 1953). Because of these characteristics, source credibility is difficult for a source to manipulate, making it a hard task for churches to foresee the success or failure of spiritual communications. As put by Bettinghaus and Cody (1994), since source credibility is defined by perceptions it is only possible to be certain that receivers believe someone or something to be credible by asking them. In church communication specifically, the very purpose of appeals is to promote the church's morals and ethos, making perceived source credibility especially important to an audience. This is particularly true given all the obstacles working against churches in the Southern Baptist Convention because of commonly held negative attitudes and beliefs about church agendas influencing the perceptions of people of lower economic status.

Poverty in Mississippi

Easily the poorest state in the nation, Mississippi is home to some of the most tragically and severely impoverished families anywhere in the country. These high poverty rates trap children and families in a grave cycle that can persist for generations.

Income and wealth are obvious measures of an area's poverty. Mississippi's poverty rate is second only to the District of Columbia: over 21% of Mississippi households and 32% of Mississippi children live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau). That's almost one and a half times the national poverty rate and almost twice the rate for

children. On more direct measures of income, Mississippi ranks dead last with a median household income of \$36,646 (compared to \$50,221 for the nation as a whole) and a per capita income of \$31,186 (compared to \$40,584 for the nation as a whole).

Education has a significant effect on social participation, lifetime income and other measures of success. On almost every metric, Mississippi ranks at or near the poorest performing states (U.S. Census Bureau):

- 47th in 2-year college degrees
- 49th in 4-year college degrees
- 49th in high school diplomas
- 50th in fourth grade math scores
- 50th in fourth grade reading scores
- 50th in eighth grade math proficiency
- 50th in eighth grade reading proficiency
- 50th in average composite ACT scores

Health is another important measure of poverty, being correlated with such factors as education, income and environment. Among key health determinants such as smoking, obesity, occupational fatalities, children in poverty, lack of health insurance, number of primary care physicians and preventable hospitalizations, Mississippi ranks among the worst in the nation. Health outcomes in Mississippi are as bad as one would expect with such poor determinants, with high rates of diabetes, poor mental and physical health days, infant mortality, cardiovascular deaths, cancer deaths and premature deaths. Overall, Mississippi ranks 48th in health determinants and 50th in health outcomes (U.S. Census Bureau).

Mississippi is the most food insecure state in the nation, with more than 21% of individuals and more than 28% of children unable, at times, to access enough food for an active, healthy life. Among all food insecure individuals, 49% are eligible for programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), 21% are eligible for other assistance programs such as Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and 29% rely on non-governmental charitable assistance. Among children, 74% likely qualify for income-eligible assistance and 26% are likely ineligible (U.S. Census Bureau).

A History of Proselytization in Christianity

As mentioned earlier in this study, the Christian Church has been proselytizing people since the last days of Jesus Christ (Atland, 1980). A brief history of the Church will help a person to understand how rhetorical appeals assist the overall proselytization of people, especially those of lower economic status.

Christianity has its root in Jewish messianism with the belief that the “anointed” leader or “Messiah” will come to resurrect the “Kingdom of God” (Atland, 1980). Christians believe Jesus of Nazareth to be this Messiah. According to the canonical Gospels, Jesus began ministering shortly after his baptism by St. John the Baptist (Atland, 1980). After his death, his twelve apostles and his seventy disciples continued his works of ministry and proselytization with their own sets of disciples. Eventually, Christianity split off from Judaism as a completely separate religion during the first century A.D. (Atland, 1980).

A great deal of persecution followed Jesus’ ascension and many of his followers were killed and imprisoned simply because of what they believed. Christianity only became legal in the fourth century, when Constantine I formed the First Council of Nicea,

which wrote the Nicene Creed (Atland, 1980). This creed is still used throughout the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church (Spitz, 1984). In 380 A.D., Christianity was officially made the religion of the Roman Empire. In the following years, it was declared that Jesus was both fully man and fully God, the books of the Bible were determined, and they also decided that the Nicene Creed was a permanent doctrine of the church at the Council of Rome (Atland, 1980). After the demise of the Roman Empire, the church expanded its missionary work in the rest of the world and the faith spread widely through the Germanic, Slavic, Celtic, Viking, Finn, and Hungarian people (Atland, 1980). After about 630, Islam began to increase quickly and soon took over previously Christian countries such as Spain and most of North Africa. Also straight after the collapse of the Romans, monasteries began to form all over Europe, which started off as simple learning centers, but soon gave rise to the first universities, such as the University of Paris, Bologna, and Oxford. Their subjects expanded from just theology to include law, medicine, and philosophy (Atland, 1980).

The Crusades are an important part of church history because of the rising Islamic population in the Holy Land and surrounding areas. The crusades failed in their main objective and led to extensive suppression of heresy in the following decades, mostly initiated by the Inquisition establishments (Atland, 1980).

Over about seven centuries the church gradually divided into two sections, the Western - Catholic and Eastern – Orthodox branches. There are several disagreements within the two sides, the most notable being the issue of papal primacy of jurisdiction. This refers to the Pope's authority over the church, and how far it should extend. There have been two attempts at reuniting the churches, but ultimately their differences seem to

be irreconcilable (Spitz, 1984).

In the 16th Century, there was a reformation in the Catholic Church, mainly led by Martin Luther, which ended in the Act of Supremacy being passed in England, effectively making the King the head of the Church of England (Spitz, 1984). The Pope was excommunicated, and the Catholic Reformation was initiated. In the following years, the divide between Protestantism and Catholicism became interwoven with politics. During all this, due to the discovery of the Americas, and subsequent colonial expansion by European countries, Christianity began to spread across the world, to the Americas, sub-Saharan Africa, and East Asia (Spitz, 1984).

Christianity has claimed roughly a third of the world's population for the last 100 years. The fact that Christianity is still growing all over the world is a reminder that the church is still as strong as ever today as it has ever been (Atland, 1980). While attendance to church has been decreasing in Europe in recent years, the church in other parts of the world has been increasing dramatically. The general demography of the church is such that it may be the first time since the 7th century that there will be more Christians outside Europe than there are within it (de Vries, 1998). It is predicted that in the 21st century, the majority of Christians will live in Latin America and Africa, and that by 2050, only one fifth of Christians will be non-Hispanic whites (de Vries, 1998).

Southern Baptist Convention

While the history of the Christian Church as a whole is important to understanding how today's churches proselytize people of lower economic strata, this study will be analyzing specifically the proselytization efforts of the Southern Baptist Convention in South Mississippi. For this reason, a historical perspective of the Southern

Baptist Convention will enable the audience to further connect with the study.

The roots of the Southern Baptist denomination go back to the Reformation in England in the sixteenth century (Leavell & Bailey, 1904). Reformists of the time called for a return to the New Testament Christian example of purity. Likewise, they called for strict accountability in their covenant with God (Leavell & Bailey, 1904). One prominent reformer in the early seventeenth century, John Smyth, was a strong promoter of adult baptism. In 1609 he re-baptized himself and others. Smyth's reforms birthed the first English Baptist church. Smyth also held to the Arminian view that God's saving grace is for everyone and not just predestined individuals (Leavell & Bailey, 1904).

By 1644, due to the efforts of Thomas Helwys and John Smyth, 50 Baptist churches were already established in England. Like many others, Roger Williams came to America to escape religious persecution, and in 1638 he established the First Baptist Church in America in Providence, Rhode Island. Because of their radical ideas about adult baptism, even in the New World they suffered religious persecution (Leavell & Bailey, 1904).

By the mid eighteenth century the number of Baptists increased greatly as a result of the Great Awakening pioneered by Jonathan Edwards. In 1755 Shubael Stearns began to spread his Baptist belief in North Carolina, leading to the establishment of 42 churches in the North Carolina area (Masters, 1915). He and his followers believed in emotional conversion, membership in a community, accountability, and adult baptism by immersion. The North Carolina Baptists or Shubael followers were referred to as Separate Baptists. The Regular Baptists resided primarily in the North (Masters, 1915).

In the late 1700's and early 1800's, as Baptists began to organize and expand, they

formed missionary societies to spread the Christian lifestyle to others. These mission societies eventually led to other organizational structures that would define and make a denomination of Southern Baptists (Sparks, 2001). By the 1830's tension began to mount between the Northern and Southern Baptists. One issue that severely divided the Baptists was slavery. Northern Baptists believed God would not condone treating one race as superior to another while Southerners said that God intended for races to be separate. Southern state Baptists began complaining that they weren't receiving money for mission work. The Home Mission Society declared that a person could not be a missionary and wish to keep his slaves as property. As a result of this division, Baptists in the south met in May of 1845 and organized the Southern Baptist Convention (Leavell & Bailey, 1904).

Today, the Southern Baptist Convention has amended its beliefs concerning slavery, and is currently the largest Protestant denomination in the United States (Sparks, 2001). However, demographics state that the Southern Baptist Convention is declining in both baptisms and new members. These facts, in association with this study, lead the audience to the research questions that this paper will attempt to answer:

RQ1: How do churches in South Mississippi use the rhetorical modes of persuasion (ethos, logos, and pathos) when ministering to people of lower economic status?

RQ2: According to people under the poverty line in the community, how do they respond to the rhetorical modes of persuasion used by churches in South Mississippi?

Methods

The use of qualitative research methods to gather data and analyze results has risen greatly over the past two decades (Strauss & Corbin, 2006). “Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality.... They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 8). In contrast to quantitative research, where data is recorded numerically, qualitative research represents the world in a more conversational manner (Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 1999). “Consequently, qualitative researchers want to study behavior in context and might even go so far as to contend that it is the interpretation of the context that is the essential process to be studied” (Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, p. 246). Using this qualitative method of research allows the study to use “*how*-and sometimes *why*-participants [that] construct meanings and actions in specific situations” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 130). This type of research allows for the details of a participant’s experience to float to the surface. Attention to small and, at times, seemingly insignificant, experiences requires the researcher to “sustain a fair amount of ambiguity” through flexibility and openness towards the data that is collected (Strauss & Corbin, 2006, p. 5). By maintaining a “beginners mind, a mind that is willing to see everything as if for the first time” the qualitative researcher supports a methodology which is ideal for explorative research of a new, or relatively new, social experience (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p. 35).

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the techniques that churches in the Southern Baptist Convention use when proselytizing people of lower economic status. Qualitative research and analysis fit this purpose better than quantitative research could offer. Also, not much research exists on the topic; therefore, qualitative

methodology is suited for this study. Since this study seeks to explore the relationship between people of lower economic status and persuasion by churches in the Southern Baptist Convention, the process of allowing the data to speak for itself further supports a qualitative method for research. Given that qualitative methods use context, individual experience, and subjective interpretation, generalized results are not possible, nor are they a goal (Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 1999).

Qualitative research, as used in this study, offers a high level of internal validity, as the participants and researcher both interpret the data as they explore how churches proselytize people of lower economic status. Yet, external validity, such as the ability to generalize these findings to the experience of all people of lower economic status, is not possible, nor intended. The ability to apply the study to the reader's personal experience, however, is a goal. Such application would allow readers of this study and future researchers to identify pieces of the data that may create an interest or spark questions within their own lives or future research.

The method used in this study incorporated five essential components. First, in data collection, open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews with both church ministers and people of lower economic status were employed. This allowed for the collection of data for each participant as well as in-depth analysis of personal experiences. Second, the researcher examined the data throughout the analysis process and came up with multiple views of the interview data. Third, the researcher worked to arrive at judgments about the meaning of the data. Fourth, the researcher looked over the data to make sure the results of the analysis were not biased. Lastly, core ideas were developed to give an overall view of the collected data.

Ideally, this study would attempt to select a statistically representative sample of both ministers of the Southern Baptist Convention in South Mississippi and people who fall under the poverty line in Mississippi. However, with over 500 Baptist churches in Lamar and Forrest County alone, and with over 24.2% of Mississippians in poverty (Ownby, 1999), it would be extremely difficult for this study to gather an adequate amount of information from this massive sample. The only way to gather from this sample would be for one to go to individuals all over South Mississippi and ask them to fill out surveys. This study was not initiated with the resources available to go through with such a daunting approach, and it could not overcome the huge sampling and data collection that would be necessary to complete such a survey method. Moreover, many of the data that this study attempts to collect pertain to the stories and opinions of both ministers and people under the poverty line in Mississippi; survey techniques are not well suited to studying the stories and opinions of these individuals. Instead, the study adopted a case study approach.

Participants

20 interviews were conducted out of 23 people who were interested in participating. Decisions for selecting the participants to be interviewed were based on the availability of both the participant and the researcher. The other three participants were thanked for their participation and were notified that the required number of participants had been met.

Recruitment

Participants in this study were drawn from two primary groups. First, a University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved email (see Appendix

A) was sent to ten ministers of Southern Baptist churches in Lamar, Forrest, or Jones County. The ages of the ministers are from 36 to 62 years, with a mean age of 54 years. The second group of participants, which was comprised of people of lower economic status, was recruited from the congregations of the ministers. A total of 17 people of lower economic status in these congregations were initially approached to participate in the study. Only 13 of the 17 showed interest in participating. After the initial contact, the people were emailed about participation by the researcher with an email with IRB approval (see Appendix B). The email informed the potential participants of the researcher's identity and the purpose and method of the study, i.e. interviews about the proselytization methods of Southern Baptist churches on people of lower economic status. The potential participants were asked to consider participating if the following criteria were met:

- For ministers, the criteria were:
 - Must be a minister in the Southern Baptist Convention
 - Must pastor a church in Lamar, Forrest, or Jones county
 - Must have had at least 10 years of ministry experience in South Mississippi
- For people of lower economic status, the criteria were:
 - Must be a resident of Lamar, Forrest, or Jones County
 - Must attend one of the churches that is pastored by one of the ministers selected

- Must have fallen underneath the poverty line in each of those counties either before or during their time in the church. (15.2% Lamar County, 25.6% Forrest County, 22.8% Jones County).

Both groups were then given surveys that would ensure their qualifications to participate in the study. Separate interviews were created for the ministers group (see Appendix C) and the people of lower economic status group (see Appendix D).

Participant Characteristics

After the recruitment process, 20 participants agreed to participate, and 20 interviews were conducted for data analysis. 10 of the interviews came from the ministers group, and 10 of the interviews came from the people of lower economic standing group. 18 of the participants were male and 2 were female. Participant ages ranged from 25-64 years old (Mean = 38.2 years; Median = 39 years).

Regarding ethnicity, 15 participants identified themselves as Caucasian, one identified as having a mixed ethnicity, two identified as African-American, and two identified as Caucasian with Native American heritage.

Instrumentation

An interview guide was created to probe the participants during each interview. Two separate lists of interview questions were created for each group. 11 questions were developed for the ministers group, and 12 questions were developed for the people of lower economic status group (see Appendix E for final interview protocol). The interview guide was analyzed by the researcher's thesis advisor and was then given IRB approval. In order to develop the relationship between the researcher and participant, the researcher engaged in casual conversation with the participant before commencing the interview.

Procedures

Participants who expressed interest in taking part in the study did so by responding to the initial email from the researcher. After responding to the researcher via email, the participants took a survey to see if they met the criteria for the study. Once the participants were cleared to be a part of the study, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews. Face-to-face interviews were chosen over phone interviews because in-person interaction allows for a natural setting during the interview process. The face-to-face interviews took place over a two month period (May 2014 to July 2014). Each of the interviews was recorded using software on the researcher's computer. Eight interviews took place in various participants' offices, four were conducted in the campus library, and eight interviews took place in various neighborhood cafes. When the interviewee chose to have the interview in a public place, issues of confidentiality were discussed prior to the initiation of the interview, and informed consent was obtained before starting the interview and audio recording (see Appendix F). Interviews varied in length between 60-90 minutes.

Data Analysis

To begin the data analysis process, the interviews were transcribed. All interviews were transcribed in a locked room to ensure that the confidentiality of the interviewees was kept intact. Once the interviews were transcribed, the researcher began to look for initial themes in the data. The initial data analysis session lasted for nearly two hours. During this session, the researcher found two main themes that recurred throughout the data: persuasion techniques (minister interviews) and reception to persuasive techniques (people of lower economic status interviews). The researcher then began to label all of

the data according to one of these themes. Once the themes were identified, the researcher began to brainstorm possible core ideas for the themes. The researcher once again sifted through all the interviews and applied the core ideas to the themes. Next, the researcher dug even deeper into the data by examining each core idea for categories, which were nuggets or threads of common or unique experiences across the interviews. Once the data were recorded, the researcher made sure that biases were not included in the analysis. The researcher also noted his reactions during the interviews by journaling his thoughts after each interview. These analyses helped support the validity of the data.

Results

The final analysis resulted in two themes, six core ideas, and 20 categories (see Table 1 for results).

Table 1: Themes, Core Ideas, and Categories

	<i>Theme</i>		<i>Core Idea</i>		<i>Category</i>
I.	Persuasion Techniques (Minister)	A.	Ethos	1.	Credibility of the minister
				2.	Credibility of the church
		B.	Logos	1.	Offering to help the person in need
				2.	Connecting the person to a group that will help them in his or her day to day life
		C.	Pathos	1.	Appeal to need
				2.	Appeal to fear
				3.	Appeal to humor
II.	Reception to Persuasion Techniques (Person of lower economic status)	A.	Social Judgment Theory	1.	Acceptance based on ego
				2.	Acceptance based on previous notions
				3.	Rejection based on ego
				4.	Rejection based on previous notions
				5.	Non-committal based on ego
				6.	Non-committal based on previous notions
		B.	Elaboration Likelihood Model	1.	Acceptance via central route
				2.	Rejection via central route
				3.	Acceptance via peripheral route
				4.	Rejection via peripheral route

Table 1: Themes, Core Ideas, and Categories (Continued)

	<i>Theme</i>		<i>Core Idea</i>		<i>Category</i>
		C.	Source Credibility Theory	1.	The person was positively affected by the minister's credibility
				2.	The person was negatively affected by the minister's credibility
				3.	The person was positively affected by the church's credibility
				4.	The person was negatively affected by the church's credibility

This qualitative study addressed the following two major research questions as follows:

1. How do churches in South Mississippi use the rhetorical modes of persuasion (ethos, logos, and pathos) when ministering to people of lower economic status?
2. According to people under the poverty line in the community, how do they respond to the rhetorical modes of persuasion used by churches in South Mississippi?

The analysis of these research questions revealed two themes, six core ideas, and twenty categories (See Table 2 for Summary of Results).

The results are organized first by themes, second by core idea, and lastly by category. The collected data is put into one of two themes. Then, core ideas are labeled within each theme. The core ideas attempt to label smaller pieces of information within the themes. Direct interview quotes are used to highlight and personalize the data. The quotes have been edited for grammatical clarity and all names have been changed to

protect participant identity. Next, descriptions of the participants are given to offer context and depth regarding the results.

Occurrence of Results

In this study of 20 participants of two groups, categories that occurred for just one participant are labeled *Rare*. Categories that occurred for two to five participants are labeled *Variant*. Categories that occurred six to eight times are labeled *Typical*. If a category had nine or more times, it would be labeled *General*; however, this frequency did not appear in this study.

Table 2: Summary of Results

	Theme		Core Idea		Category	<i>n</i>	Frequency
I.	Persuasion Techniques (Minister) RQ 1: How do churches in South Mississippi use the rhetorical modes of persuasion (ethos, logos, and pathos) when ministering to people of lower economic status?	A.	Ethos	1.	Credibility of the minister	2	Variant
				2.	Credibility of the church	6	Typical
		B.	Logos	1.	Offering to help the person in need	8	Typical
				2.	Connecting the person to a group that will help them in his or her day-to-day life	3	Variant
		C.	Pathos	1.	Appeal to need	8	Typical
				2.	Appeal to fear	3	Variant
				3.	Appeal to humor	6	Typical

Table 2: Summary of Results (Continued)

	Theme		Core Idea		Category	<i>n</i>	Frequency
II.	<p>Reception to Persuasion Techniques (Person of lower economic status)</p> <p>RQ 2: According to people under the poverty line in the community, how do they respond to the rhetorical modes of persuasion used by churches in South Mississippi?</p>	A.	Social Judgment Theory	1.	Acceptance based on ego	1	Rare
				2.	Acceptance based on previous notions	4	Variant
				3.	Rejection based on ego	3	Variant
				4.	Rejection based on previous notions	5	Variant
				5.	Non-committal based on ego	4	Variant
				6.	Non-committal based on previous notions	3	Variant
		B.	Elaboration Likelihood Model	1.	Acceptance via central route	4	Variant
				2.	Rejection via central route	2	Variant
				3.	Acceptance via peripheral route	7	Typical
				4.	Rejection via peripheral route	3	Variant
		C.	Source Credibility Theory	1.	The person was positively affected by the minister's credibility	4	Variant
				2.	The person was negatively affected by the minister's credibility	5	Variant
				3.	The person was positively affected by the church's credibility	8	Typical
				4.	The person was negatively affected by the church's credibility	2	Variant

Reflection on Participant Characteristics

Several of the participants' characteristics likely had a heavy influence on the data gathered. To start, six of the ten ministers who participated in the study were from Jones County. Each of the ministers had been in Jones County for over fifteen years. Southern Baptist churches in Jones County have a tendency to be very conservative and rich in tradition. They each also ministered to churches of less than 300 people. It is likely that the participants had a unique ability to understand the situations of people of lower economic status in their congregations.

Also, the people of lower economic status had the opportunity to not participate in the study. For this reason, it is safe to assume that these people of lower economic status are confident enough in themselves to submit their personal information to a study.

Persuasion Techniques (Minister)

Ethos

Three core ideas arose from the theme of Minister Persuasion Techniques: ethos, logos, and pathos. The first core idea, ethos, contained the various ways that ministers used credibility to persuade people of lower economic status. The analysis of the data revealed two distinct ways in which ministers used credibility to persuade. The two categories are: 1) credibility of the minister and 2) credibility of the church.

Credibility of the minister. The first category, Credibility of the Minister ($n=2$), was variant in frequency and was the least common way that ministers persuaded people of lower economic status. One minister stated that his credibility had absolutely no purpose in the persuasion of people of lower economic status. Another minister said he prefers to keep his credibility out of the situations. Yet, one minister said that he likes to

use his personality and charisma to his advantage, that it helps the person of lower economic status to trust him.

Credibility of the church. The second category, Credibility of the Church ($n=6$), was typical in frequency and was one of the most common ways that ministers persuaded people of lower economic status. One minister stated that the main way they attract people of lower economic status to their church was by the way that the reputation of their church spreads around the community.

Yeah, our church has always been known for one that takes care of people who are down and out. I think that once people know about what we do, you know, it gets out to the people that need to hear about us most. A lot of the people that come through our doors didn't hear about us from the Internet or billboards. They heard about us from other people; they heard about our credibility.

Logos

The second core idea within the theme of Minister Persuasion Techniques is Logos. This core idea describes the ways that ministers use logic and reason to persuade people of lower economic status. These data are identified through two distinct categories: 1) offering to help the person in need, and 2) connecting the person to a group that will help them in his or her day to day life.

Offering to help the person in need. This category describes the minister's technique of giving people a logical reason to become part of his church: if they join, they will help that person out. The frequency of this category was typical ($n=8$). One participant described their use of the category by stating,

...one thing we always try to do when [people of lower economic status] come through our doors is give them a reason to stay. They don't want to hear about eternal pleasure when they don't even know if they will be able to pay their rent this month. That's why we tell them that if they join the church and show good

trajectory, we may be able to help them out financially. I don't think we're the only church that does this, either. We have a Ministry of Caring, but I'm sure plenty of other churches do the same thing. It's just what we're called to do.

Another participant went on to discuss the joy that he has when helping these people out:

Yeah, that's definitely one of my favorite parts of ministry. Just being able to see how they make the connection between how we can help them financially and spiritually is the reason I do what I do.

Frequently, as participants talked about this particular category, they began to brighten up and smile. Almost consistently the participants were able to recall, with great memory, specific times in which they used this category to persuade people of lower economic status to join their church.

Connecting the person to a group that will help them in his or her day-to-day life. The second category, Connecting the Person to a Group That Will Help Them in His or Her Day-to-Day Life ($n=3$) was not as common among the answers that the ministers gave. These participants reported examples of constant effort in this category to try and persuade people of lower economic status.

It's just downright gritty, man. I mean, when a person comes into our congregation with a stressful financial situation, we try our best to plug them into a community of believers that will help them get back up on the horse. And sometimes, that just isn't fun. People don't like feeling vulnerable. But it's necessary. It's kind of like pulling a rotten tooth. The person hates it at first, but in the end, they are very thankful that it happened.

This "community of believers" that was mentioned above came in many forms in the interviews that the ministers gave. Some called them Growth Groups, while some others called them Sunday School classes. No matter what they were called, they were each small groups of 10-15 people that would meet together once a week to discuss how each other were doing.

Pathos

The third core idea found within this theme is Pathos. This core idea explains how ministers and their churches would use emotional appeals to persuade people of lower economic status to join their church. These data are identified through the following three categories: 1) Appeal to Need, 2) Appeal to Fear, 3) Appeal to Humor.

Appeal to need. This category describes the type of persuasion that ministers used to explain to people of lower economic status that they needed to be a part of the congregation ($n=8$). This category was typical in the minister interviews. One of the ministers described this type of persuasion by stating,

This is probably the biggest way we attract [people of lower economic status]. When they come to our church, they immediately know that they are in need of something. That's just the Gospel. We're in need of something to fulfill us, and we can't find it on our own. Every message I preach has this notion at its base: we are broken, we need to be fixed, we can't fix ourselves, but Jesus can fix us. Normally this really appeals to people of lower economic status because they have already exhausted all options.

Appeal to fear. The second category, Appeal to Fear, was the least noted category to be used by the ministers in the persuasion techniques ($n=3$). It is worth noting that all three mentions of this category came from ministers who had churches in Jones County. One of the ministers described how he uses fear appeals to persuade people of lower economic status,

...that sometimes, putting the fear of God in them is exactly what they need. When you did something wrong as a child, your parents got on to you so they could instill fear in you, which in turn would keep you from doing that wrong thing again.

Interviewer: So you think they did something wrong to get them in this situation?

Not all the time, but quite often that is the case. Frugality and good stewardship of your finances will help you to keep afloat, but when you go and waste it all away,

you start to get yourself in trouble. You just don't have any boundaries, so sometimes you need to get a little scared of what could happen. That's why I think it's good to have a little fear appeal put into your sermons every now and then.

Conversely, another minister whose church was in Lamar County talked directly against using fear appeals as a persuasion tactic,

No way. You'll never catch me using fear appeals in any type of message that I give. People just don't need to hear that kind of stuff. I mean, they have to deal with fear, scare, and intimidation tactics six days out of the week. They don't need to hear it from us, too.

The types of fear appeals used were normally pointed towards the person of lower economic status' lack of control over his or her finances. One other type of fear appeal that was mentioned was the fear of the afterlife and of Hell

Appeal to humor. The last category discussed in the Pathos core idea, was Appeal to humor ($n=6$). The category was typical in nature, and was used by many of the interviewed participants. One minister described the appeal in this way,

Honestly, I think saying funny things from the stage is the best way to get people pulled in, especially if they are [people of lower economic status]. They have to deal with pain and suffering all of the time, so it's good for them to get a little comic relief on Sundays. I've found that when I employ comedy in most of my sermons, people are more likely to come back. Everyone I talk to who have struggled financially have told me how much they enjoy hearing me just be real and funny with them, you know? People appreciate it when you shoot straight with them, especially if it's funny.

The experiences and insights of these participants highlight the types of categories that ministers in South Mississippi use to persuade people of lower economic status to join their church. Next, the people of lower economic status' receptions to persuasion techniques are explored.

Receptions to Persuasion Techniques (People of Lower Economic Status)

The second theme that arose from the data showed the people of lower economic status' Reception to Persuasion Techniques used by the ministers. This theme was explored through three core ideas: 1) Social Judgment Theory, 2) Elaboration Likelihood Model, and 3) Source Credibility Theory. The participants attributed their receptions to the persuasion techniques to various factors; however, the specific receptions were similar among participants. Moreover, some participants stated multiple factors that ultimately led to their acceptance or rejection of the persuasion techniques.

Social Judgment Theory

A total of six categories comprise the first core idea, Social Judgment Theory: 1) Acceptance Based on Ego, 2) Acceptance Based on Previous Notions, 3) Rejection Based on Ego, 4) Rejection Based on Previous Notions, 5) Noncommittal Based on Ego, and 6) Noncommittal Based on Previous Notions.

Acceptance Based on Ego. A very small number of participants ($n=1$) described their acceptance of the persuasion techniques because of their egos, or how central the issue was to the participant's life. The following quote highlights the participant's ego involvement in their acceptance of the persuasive techniques.

I don't know. It's just, like, when I hear [the pastor] preach on things like getting your life right and letting the Lord help you with finances and stuff, I really connect with that. It's just the season I'm in, you know? So it's like when you buy a new car, you start seeing that car everywhere you go. When I was in that bad financial situation, it seemed like everything the preacher talked about was meant directly for me. That's why I was so hooked to that church in the first place. I always felt like I could learn something new every time I went.

Acceptance based on previous notions. Acceptance Based on Previous Notions occurs when the participant accepts the persuasive techniques because of situations and

circumstances that he or she has faced, as well as predetermined thoughts towards the subject. A few participants found this category to be true of their experiences ($n=4$). One person described his experience in a new church as everything he missed at his old church. The participant remembered how he enjoyed church as a child, but stopped going once he got to college. A few years after college, the participant fell into hard times and, recalling how much he enjoyed church as a kid, started attending church once more.

Rejection Based on Ego. A few ($n=3$) of the participants reported rejecting the persuasion techniques based on their egos, or how central the issue was to the participant's life. One participant explained that during a visit to one of the churches in Jones County, the persuasion techniques that the pastor used did not cause the participant to accept the persuasion. They described their experience in the following words.

I joined [the church], but not because of how the pastor persuaded me. Yeah, I was in a financial slump, but it isn't the worst that's ever happened to me. I've seen myself out of a lot worse stuff. I had other issues at hand, anyway. So yeah, I joined, but because of other reasons.

Rejection Based on Previous Notions. A few more participants recorded rejection based on previous notions ($n=5$), but it was still a variant category. However, it seemed that the feeling of rejection based on previous notions were common in the participants that attended the churches in Jones County. One participant described their experience of this category in this way.

I've grown up in church. I've heard every possible way and answer that [a minister] could give to me, but it has never worked. Every time one of them tried to give me advice, it would normally put me in an even worse situation. So needless to say, I was wary when I started going to [this church in Jones County]. The only thing I've come to expect from pastors in this area is empty promises, and, as it turns out, I was right again. I didn't get any help back then, and I sure haven't gotten any now.

One participant distinctly remembers walking out of a sermon because the pastor had a preaching style similar to a preacher that the participant had heard before and did not like. Another participant refused to join a small group within one of the churches because they had once had a friend group that damaged the participant's confidence in their own ability.

Non-committal Based on Ego. Non-committal decisions were an unanticipated finding in this study. Non-committal decisions are simply when a participant decided to remove themselves from the situation instead of accepting or rejecting the persuasion techniques. Several ($n=4$) participants decided that they would be neutral in regards to the ministers' persuasion techniques because they simply did not feel that the situation was central to their lives. One participant explained this category in the following way.

Whenever I started to hear [the persuasion techniques], I would immediately tune out. It really didn't matter to me that [the minister] was trying to get me to join during that time in my life. I wasn't there for that. I was just there to explore new churches in the community. So when he started to really drive home [the persuasion techniques], I simply shut him out for a few minutes until the service went in a new direction.

Non-committal Based on Previous Notions. Fewer participants ($n=3$) decided that because of past situations and actions in their lives, they would simply not respond to the church's persuasion techniques. Instead, each of them decided that they would simply wait out the minister to see if he would take a new route to try and proselytize them.

Elaboration Likelihood Model

The second core idea within the theme of Reception to Persuasive Techniques examines the participants responses based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model. Some participants who gave responses that fit into the Social Judgment Theory also gave

responses that fit into the Elaboration Likelihood Model core idea. The following four categories summarize the participants' experiences with the Elaboration Likelihood Model: 1) Acceptance via Central Route, 2) Rejection via Central Route, 3) Acceptance via Peripheral Route, and 4) Rejection via Peripheral Route.

Acceptance via central route. Four participants ($n=4$) accepted the persuasion techniques of the ministers through the central route of mental processing, which is when the person takes a subject and decides upon it based on fact and deliberation instead of superficial information. The following quotes highlight the participants' use of the central route when accepting the persuasive techniques.

...he began to talk about all of the ways that the church could help me out while I was in my financial crisis. It all seemed too good to be true; I had never been in a place that cared so deeply for me during this rough time. I decided that I needed to discuss this further with [the minister] just to make sure that I wasn't missing anything. When something this good comes up, you have to make sure you have all of your t's crossed, you know? So we sat down in [the minister's] office a few times, and he gave me some concrete information.

Interviewer: How did he give you the information?

He laid it all out there for me, and he even wrote it down. I had phone numbers for people that I could get in contact with in case I needed any help. It was great.

Rejection via central route. Rejection via the central route, or deciding against persuasion because one has thought out the circumstance, situation, or offer, did not seem to play a major factor in the participants' experiences ($n=2$). One participant reported listening to a message from the pastor and researching the topic further on the Internet after getting home. The participant found that, after studying the topic deeper, the participant could not agree with what the pastor said. The participant's experience of

thinking deeply on the matter and disagreeing with the original persuasion illustrates that the participant rejected the church's persuasion via the central route.

Acceptance via the peripheral route. Quite a few ($n=7$) of the participants reported accepting the persuasive techniques via the peripheral route. One participant explained her experience through the following:

...but I had heard this spill a thousand times. [The preachers] would always shout and scream about how poverty is a result of bad planning and stuff like that. But when [the pastor of the participant's church] started talking about the same subject, about money and stuff, he didn't yell or scream or seem mad. He just talked confidently. He was very nice and told us that, sometimes, bad things happen to good people, and I believed him. Honestly, that's all I really remember about why I decided to join the church. I felt like [the pastor] took me seriously and didn't treat me like I was just some sort of idiot.

A different participant explained that even though she listened to the message given by the pastor, she was really drawn to the way he made everyone laugh during his sermons.

Rejection via the peripheral route. A variant number of participants ($n=3$) explained how they rejected the persuasion techniques of the church through the peripheral route. One participant stated that he did not like the way the pastor stayed in the back until it was time to come out and preach, so the participant left. Situations like these show that the participants did not thoroughly contemplate the persuasion before making a decision; instead, they were motivated by other cues to reject the persuasion technique.

Source Credibility Theory

The final core idea within the theme of reception to persuasion techniques examines the frequency of the Source Credibility Theory in the experiences of the people

of lower economic status. The following four categories summarize the participants' involvement of Source Credibility Theory: 1) the person was positively affected by the minister's credibility, 2) the person was negatively affected by the minister's credibility, 3) the person was positively affected by the church's credibility, 4) the person was negatively affected by the church's credibility.

The person was positively affected by the minister's credibility. Four participants ($n=4$) reported being positively affected by the minister's credibility. One participant explained his experience in this manner:

Some dear family friends had been telling me about [the pastor] for ages. They said he was hilarious and made every sermon apply directly to you, no matter what he was talking about. I had been in and out of churches for a while and it just seemed like I could never find a good fit. But once I actually listened to what my friends were telling me and went to one of the services, I was hooked. [The pastor] literally had me at hello.

Another participant talked about how, when she moved to Lamar County 3 years ago because her house got foreclosed and she was forced to file for bankruptcy, she started looking for a church home and immediately heard about the pastor of one of the churches in Lamar County. She explained that she only heard good things about him, so she decided to try out the church just to see if the things she had heard were true.

The person was negatively affected by the minister's credibility. A variant number ($n=5$) of participants were negatively affected by the minister's credibility.

Several participants had things to say along this subject line, including the following:

People had told me that [the pastor] just isn't a good person. They said that all he cares about is getting a good tithe every Sunday so that he can play golf the rest of the week. He doesn't care about seeing people join the church or get saved or anything like that. So I just didn't even try to go anymore. I had been going to the college service on Wednesday nights for a little while, but when I heard all of the stuff they were saying, I just decided to not even try it.

Another participant spoke of one minister's credibility in this way:

...because it's not like I would have listened to him, anyway. Everyone that goes to talk to him just comes out feeling defeated and like a loser. There's no way I could ever try to talk to a person like that. I have enough to feel bad about as it is.

The person was positively affected by the church's credibility. A high number ($n=8$) of participants reported being positively affected by the church's credibility. Many of them talked about how they had heard about all that the church was doing to help people in the community, and they wanted to be a part of that. Some talked about how they heard from others that the church would welcome them in and help them with their problems, so they joined the church congregation.

The person was negatively affected by the church's credibility. In contrast to the above category, only a couple ($n=2$) of participants explained that they were negatively impacted by the church's credibility. Both participants reported nearly the same experience; the participants heard that the church was unwilling to help them out in a time of need, so, after attending a few times, the participants decided to stop going.

Summary of Research Findings

The analysis of these research questions yielded two themes, six core ideas, and twenty-one categories (see Table 2 for Summary of Results). The results are organized first by themes, second by core ideas, and lastly by categories. Data were grouped first by theme. Then, one or more core ideas appear under each theme. The core ideas attempt to categorize smaller pieces of information within the themes. The categories highlight unique components of the participants' experiences within each theme. Direct interview quotes are used to highlight and personalize the data. The quotes have been edited for

grammatical clarity, and names have been removed for privacy. Descriptions of the participants' experiences are used to offer context and depth regarding the results. Next, a discussion of these results is explored.

Summary, Discussion, Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore Southern Baptist churches in Jones, Lamar, and Forrest counties, the rhetorical techniques that they use to proselytize people of lower economic status, and the reactions of the people of lower economic status to the rhetorical techniques. The unique and specific relationship that churches have with people of lower economic status may suggest that the initiation of their relationships differs from social connections that people of lower economic status have with other institutions. Given the importance of relational connection between a church and its congregants, especially those of lower economic status, an investigation into the proselytization techniques of churches, as well as the reactions of people of lower economic status was warranted.

Participants included in this study were 20 people, 10 ministers and 10 people of lower economic status. Each of the participants was self-selected after being approached by the researcher. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with all of the participants. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. The researcher then used qualitative methodology to analyze the interviews. The themes, core ideas, and categories were reviewed and re-evaluated to support the results. Data analysis revealed two themes, six core ideas, and twenty-one categories.

Discussion

Church's Use of Persuasion Techniques (RQ1)

A majority of the ministers who were interviewed ($n=8$) stated that they used both logical (logos) and emotional (pathos) appeals to a congregant's need. There lies a connection between this finding and the people of lower economic standing's marking

that a significant number ($n=7$) accepted the church's persuasion via the peripheral route. This asserts that when the ministers of the churches utilized logical and emotional appeals to need, the people of lower economic status would accept the persuasion techniques by understanding only in a distracted or emotional way the issues at hand.

While tentative, it is likely that the most effective way to persuade and eventually proselytize a person of lower economic status is to appeal, either logically or emotionally, to his or her need. This suggestion is based off of the information provided in the results section of this study. Then, it is also likely that the method in which the person of lower economic status receives this persuasion is through the peripheral route of the Elaboration Likelihood Model. The experience of participants in this study suggests that the people of lower economic status did not think deeply upon the subject of their personal need.

The credibility of the church has been found to be present ($n=6$) in the persuasion techniques of Southern Baptist churches in South Mississippi. Just as logical and emotional appeals to a person's need seem to be a significant persuasion method used by churches in the Southern Baptist Convention, so too is the church's credibility. The church's credibility also likely plays a significant role in the person of lower economic status' acceptance of the persuasion through the peripheral route. Although the connection between a church's credibility and a person's acceptance via the peripheral route is yet to be explored empirically, the results of this study suggest that the credibility of a church is present in the peripheral acceptance in some people of lower economic status.

Another significant amount of participants ($n=6$) stated that they used humor appeals as a persuasive method when proselytizing people of lower economic status. One participant described his use of humor in the following words.

Whenever I preach, I always try to remind myself that most of the people who are going through tough financial situations do not want to be reminded that they are going through tough times. I have found that people like to step out of the problems that they are in and attempt to gain, even if for just a short amount of time, relief from their circumstances. The best way that I have been able to do that for these people is by being funny. Our congregation loves to laugh. It helps them to see that fear, anger, and sadness are not the only emotions that they have to go through. That is why I tell so many jokes during my sermons. To relieve the tension. People don't always have to be drained emotionally to come to the Lord. Sometimes, it just takes a little laughter.

This study has found that ministers who have frequently employed humor as a persuasion tactic were more likely to proselytize and retain people who use the peripheral route to accept persuasion. The results of this current study also suggest a potential link for the use of humor in sermons with the overall proselytization of people of lower economic status in South Mississippi. For example, some of the participants ($n=7$) experienced the utilization of humor in a minister's sermon and responded by accepting the church's appeal to join the congregation.

Given that appeals to logic and emotion and the use of humor are rhetorical techniques used specifically by the ministers of the church, and the church's credibility is a technique created by the church itself overall, the rhetorical techniques seem to conflict with themselves. One may say that it is impossible to determine the source of the rhetorical technique. To the contrary, the church's credibility is ultimately determined by the overall vision of the pastor, and many participants ($n=8$) noted that they determined the credibility of the church based on the preaching style of the minister. With this in

mind, it is worth noticing that in order to effectively persuade and proselytize people of lower economic status, the minister of the church must take on the responsibility of using appeals of logic and emotion, employing humor appeals, and building up the credibility of the church with the sermons that are preached.

People of Lower Economic Status' Reactions to the Persuasion Techniques (RQ2)

A defining difference within the way that people of lower economic status reacted to the persuasion techniques of the churches in the Southern Baptist Convention came down to two distinct factors: acceptance via the peripheral route and being positively affected by the church's credibility. Each of these factors is in the affirmative, but each also has a distinct relation to the persuasion techniques used by the churches. In the end, however, it is determined through this study that people of lower economic status were positively affected by the persuasion techniques mentioned above.

The first reaction mentioned above, acceptance via the peripheral route ($n=7$), was one of only two typical categories found in the reactions of people lower economic status section in the results of this study. The participants' experiences discussed in the results section highlight the notion of acceptance of the churches' persuasion via the peripheral route. One particular participant, after hearing the minister use humor multiple times in his sermons, stated that she felt that she could be a part of that church for years to come, not particularly because she had thought hard about her situation, but because she could get away from her problems when she heard the minister use humor.

The second reaction mentioned was the person of lower economic status being positively affected by the church's credibility ($n=8$). As mentioned in the previous section, the participants' positivity towards the church because of the church's credibility

appears to be associated with the minister's ability to establish the church's credibility through his sermons. The results found in this study highlight the relationship between, ultimately, the persuasion techniques of the church's pastor and the reactions of the people of lower economic status, especially when concerning the credibility of the church.

Conclusions

All in all, the Elaboration Likelihood Model and Source Credibility Theory play the biggest role in the decision of people of lower economic status to accept the persuasion techniques of Southern Baptist Churches in South Mississippi. People of lower economic status are more likely to accept persuasion based on the church's credibility as well as through the peripheral route. Given the significance that RQ1 has on the reactions in RQ2, it is important to take notice of the three main effective ways in which churches persuade. The first is the use of logical (logos) and emotional (appeals). The second is the use of humor appeals, and the third is the credibility of the church. In using these appeals to persuade people of lower economic status, the ministers are far more likely to proselytize and retain their target group.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model helped explain the results found in this study through its explanation of the peripheral and central routes of persuasion acceptance. A majority of the participants in this study accepted persuasion via the peripheral route, which means that the participants accepted the persuasion based on message cues instead of the actual substance of the message. This study actually strengthens the Elaboration Likelihood Model by providing real life examples and participant statements that complement and affirm the propositions made by the Elaboration Likelihood Model.

The Source Credibility Theory was also affirmed through this study. Many of the participants stated in this study that they accepted the church's persuasion based on the credibility of the church itself. As a result of being positively affected by the church's credibility, the participants were much more willing to listen to, consider, and accept the persuasion techniques of the church. The church presents itself as credible to the person of lower economic status, which leads to the person believing that the church is credible, therefore providing confirmation of the Source Credibility Theory.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

A primary strength of this study is the goodness of fit between the research topic, research participants, and research methodology. The use of interviews and qualitative method helped the researcher to gain the closest meaning to the participant's words as possible. With a focus on interpersonal dynamics and interviewer skill within the interview process, qualitative methodology allowed for participant-centered interviewing, in which the interview protocol was flexible enough to adapt to the individual experiences and interview style of the participants. This structured, yet individualized interview style allowed for a great spectrum of data collection and truthful, intimate conversations to occur during the interview process. This method of data collection provided the flexibility necessary for this exploratory study.

Given that little to no literature exists on the rhetorical methods used by churches, as well as people of lower economic status' reaction to these methods, another strength of this research is studying a topic that is yet to be thoroughly investigated in literature. This exploratory study provides a platform from which to examine specific dynamics of the relationships between churches' persuasion and people of lower economic status' reactions.

Additionally, another strength of the study incorporates the participant composition of the sample. The sample is comprised of ten ministers who pastor Southern Baptist churches in Lamar, Forrest, or Jones counties, as well as ten people of lower economic status that attend the churches of the ministers.

Limitations to this study include restricted boundaries to external and internal validity. The lack of external validity is the inability to generalize the findings of this study to other groups, denominations, populations, or individuals because the results represent only the words and experiences of this study's participants. Although it is never a goal of qualitative methods to state objective truths within a situation, or to generalize the results, the findings of this study are limited in application to the participants studied. Therefore, future research, as discussed below, is needed to confirm or disconfirm the initial findings of this study. Another limitation to this study involves the concept of internal validity. The stability and reliability of the results of this study could have been increased had the participants been involved in verifying the data analysis for accuracy of their intentions. Participant verification was not used in this study's research process. Involving participants in the data analysis process could strengthen future qualitative research of the topic.

Further, the participant sample size of ten ministers and ten people of lower economic status could have been increased to gather a greater understanding of the stability of results. Additionally, the self-report method of data collection for experiences that occurred up to the five years ago could also influence the accuracy of reported experiences as memory can fade or change with the addition of time. Also, two of the ministers who participated had their doctorate degree. The participants' knowledge of the research process and interview skills could also have interacted with the data collection process.

In addition, another limitation of this study involves potential researcher bias. Although strong measures were taken to avoid clouding the data collection and analysis,

it is likely that some aspect of the personality of the researcher interacted with the research process. One aspect to consider is the interview protocol; perhaps the researcher's biases prevented the participants from responding to the best questions on the research topic. All of these limitations are aspects for consideration and caution in future research.

Future Directions for Research

The results of this study form a springboard for future research to address further aspects of the relationships between persuasion techniques of churches and the reactions of people of lower economic status within a larger, more diverse sample size. It is evident that somewhat similar experiences existed for the people of lower economic status regarding the persuasive appeals that they were exposed to, not only in Southern Baptist churches, but in other denominations as well. Differences may be found with a different and larger sample size. A few directions for further research have been noted above in the limitations to this research. For example, increasing the diversity of participants (e.g., diversity of education, age, class, ethnicity, sexual identity, gender identity, denomination, location) in future research could add to the depth and accuracy of findings regarding churches' persuasion techniques and people of lower economic status' reactions. Also, incorporating participants in the data analysis process by having them review interview transcripts and summaries, or conducting small groups regarding the initial findings could improve the stability and consistency of the findings by decreasing the potential for researcher bias to cloud the interpretation of the data.

Additionally, a future phase of research on this topic could incorporate quantitative methods into the methodology. Measuring a person's activity in a church

before proselytization, perceived persuasion methods, physical and emotional components of reacting to persuasion, and self-awareness when using or responding to persuasive techniques could additionally be measured through quantitative instrumentation. Extending the notion of persuasion techniques to different denominations and the reactions of people in different socioeconomic classes would provide further directions for research on this topic. Further, conducting future research with both the minister and the person being persuaded at the same time could provide a multifaceted perspective of the rhetorical process that is taking place between the two groups.

Conclusion

This study attempted to ascertain and record the experiences of ten ministers of Southern Baptist churches in Lamar, Forrest, and Jones counties, as well as ten people of lower economic status who attended those churches. The participants' words in this study suggest that persuasive techniques used by the ministers can span the spectrum of emotional experience, from logical and emotional appeals to one's need to appeals to humor and credibility. It is with humble appreciation of the participants' courage to share their proselytization experiences that this research has been completed.

The results of this study suggest that the topic of persuasion efforts by churches and the reactions of people is a worthwhile topic for future research. The findings further suggest that the persuasion experienced by the people of lower economic status was an important experience in their lives. Lastly, the results indicate potential connections between a church's use of its own credibility, logical and emotional appeals to need, and appeals to humor, and a person of lower economic status' acceptance of persuasion via the peripheral route and being positively affected by the church's credibility. Source Credibility Theory and the Elaboration Likelihood Model were major components found in the acceptance of persuasion by the people of lower economic status. It is this researcher's hope that as more is understood about the relationship between a church's persuasion and the reactions of people of lower economic status, that all people's church experiences can be as fulfilling as possible.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT EMAIL 1 (TO MINISTERS)

“Hello,

My name is Blake Houston and I am an Honors student at the University of Southern Mississippi. My Honors thesis investigates churches in the Southern Baptist Convention and their uses of persuasion to proselytize people of lower economic status, as well as the people of lower economic status’ receptions to these persuasion techniques.

I am looking for participants and am wondering if you are interested.

What it involves: This study is explorative, involving a 60-90 minute interview about persuasion techniques that your church uses to proselytize people of lower economic status.

The criteria for participation: You must have been a pastor for at least ten years at a Southern Baptist church in Jones, Lamar, or Forrest counties.

If this topic interests you and you meet the criteria, I would love to hear from you. Please email me at blake.houston@eagles.usm.edu.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks for your consideration,

Blake Houston”

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT EMAIL 2 (TO PEOPLE OF LOWER ECONOMIC STATUS)

“Hello,

My name is Blake Houston and I am an Honors student at the University of Southern Mississippi. My Honors thesis investigates churches in the Southern Baptist Convention and their uses of persuasion to proselytize people of lower economic status, as well as the people of lower economic status’ receptions to these persuasion techniques.

I am looking for participants and am wondering if you are interested.

What it involves: This study is explorative, involving a 60-90 minute interview about persuasion techniques that your church uses, as well as your reactions to the persuasion techniques.

The criteria for participation: You must have been a person who attends a Southern Baptist church in Lamar, Jones, or Forrest counties and has classified as “low income” during some point over the past ten years.

If this topic interests you and you meet the criteria, I would love to hear from you. Please email me at blake.houston@eagles.usm.edu.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks for your consideration,

Blake Houston

APPENDIX C: MINISTER SURVEY

Blake W. Houston

The University of Southern Mississippi
601.467.3809

Blake W. Houston requests your help in a research endeavor. Please complete the following research survey.

Minister Name:

County:

Church:

Date:

1. How long have you been ministering in a church setting?

-
- ☐ 0-5 years ☐ 6-10 years ☐ 11-15 years ☐ More than 15 years

2. Of those years, how many were spent ministering in Lamar, Forrest, or Jones Counties?

-
- ☐ 0-5 years ☐ 6-10 years ☐ 11-15 years ☐ More than 15 years

3. What is the average attendance of your church?

-
- ☐ 1-500 ☐ 501-1000 ☐ 1001-2000 ☐ More than 2000

4. Of those attendees, what percentage would fall under the poverty line in South Mississippi?

-
- ☐ 0%-5% ☐ 6%-10% ☐ 11%-15% ☐ More than 15%

5. Does your church have any programs or ministries specifically designed towards people of lower economic standing?

-
- ☐ Yes ☐ No

6. If yes, could you briefly describe these ministries?

☐

7. On average, how many times a week do you minister to people of lower economic standing one-on-one?

-
- ☐ 0-5 times ☐ 6-10 times ☐ 11-15 times ☐ 15 or more times

8. Overall, would you say the branding of your church in the community is...

-
- ☐ Less than desirable ☐ As expected ☐ Better than expected ☐ Consistently better

9. General comments about your church's branding techniques:

☐ Please check this box to grant us permission to use your church's demographics (but not name) in this study.

☐ Please check this box if you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview to further discuss your church's rhetorical techniques.

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey. Your responses are valued and very much appreciated!

APPENDIX D: PEOPLE OF LOWER ECONOMIC STATUS SURVEY

Blake W. Houston

The University of Southern Mississippi
601.467.3809

Blake W. Houston requests your help in a research endeavor. Please complete the following research survey.

Attendee Name:

County:

Church:

Date:

10. What is your age?

-
- ☐ 15-20 years old ☐ 21-30 years old ☐ 31-40 years old ☐ Older than 40 years

11. Are you male or female?

-
- ☐ Male ☐ Female

12. How long have you been attending the church listed above?

-
- ☐ 0-2 years ☐ 3-5 years ☐ 6-10 years ☐ More than 10 years

13. Is this church in Lamar, Forest, or Jones County?

☐ Yes

☐ No

14. During your time attending the church, have you ever fallen below the poverty line, according to the standard set by the State of Mississippi?

☐ Yes

☐ No

15. If yes, could you briefly describe the relationship that you had with your church during that time?

☐

16. Have you ever received one-on-one financial counseling from a minister at your church?

☐ Yes

☐ No

17. Does your church have specific ministries designed for people of lower economic standing?

☐ Yes

☐ No

18. If yes, please give some general comments about these ministries and how they have affected you:

☐ Please check this box if you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview to further discuss your history with your church, and your relationship with your church while being of lower economic standing.

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey. Your responses are valued and very much appreciated!

APPENDIX E: FINAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Pastor's Interview Guide

1. How has your church worked to characterize itself toward the community?
2. What sort of persuasive appeals do you use in your sermons?
3. What type of reasoning do you normally include in your sermons?
4. What emotions do you attempt to elicit from your audience?
5. What actions do you take to increase the trust that your members have in you?
6. How do you decide the topic of your weekly sermons?
7. What ministries in your church have the potential to aid people of lower economic means?
8. Are there any ministries aimed toward people of lower economic means?
 - a. Follow up: How are these ministries promoted in your church and community?
9. What does your church do to assist people of lower economic means in your community at large?
10. What differences, if any, do you notice in responses to your sermons by people of different economic means?
11. How effective do you believe your church to be at reaching people of lower economic means?

Member Interview Guide

1. What was your first impression of the church?
2. Generally, what works for you in a pastor's sermon?
3. Generally, what doesn't work for you in a pastor's sermon?
4. Tell me about your pastor's sermons.
5. What kind of reasoning does your pastor include in his sermons?
6. What does your pastor do to increase your trust in him?
7. What emotions do you feel whenever listening to your pastor's sermons?
8. What topics do you like to hear about in your pastor's sermons?
9. What ministries in your church have the potential to aid people of lower economic means?
10. Are there any ministries aimed toward people of lower economic means?
 - a. Follow up: How have these ministries affected you?
11. What does your church do to assist people of lower economic means in your community at large?
12. At this point, what are your overall impressions of the church's ministries?

APPENDIX F: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study University of Southern Mississippi

A Comparison of the Rhetorical Modes of Persuasion Used by Churches in the Proselytization of Peoples of Lower Economic Status in South Mississippi

Description of the research and your participation

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Blake W. Houston. The purpose of this research is twofold. The first will be to determine the rhetorical techniques used by the churches when ministering to people of lower economic standing in South Mississippi. This will include verbal, nonverbal, and branding techniques used by the churches to create an enticing atmosphere, especially to people of lower economic standing.

The second aspect of the study will focus on people in each of those churches who have been, at some point or another, fallen under the poverty line in South Mississippi. The study will attempt to determine what rhetorical techniques had the biggest impact on low-income people's decision to be part of that church.

Your participation will involve completing surveys and interviews that will give insight to the rhetorical uses of churches and/or the response of people of lower economic standing in South Mississippi to the rhetoric of the church.

Risks and discomforts

There are no known risks associated with this research.

Potential benefits

There are no known benefits to you that would result from your participation in this research. This research may help us to understand the correlation between a church's rhetorical techniques and the response of people of lower economic standing to those techniques.

Protection of confidentiality

All of the records collected from the participants will be kept confidential. Electronic data will be password protected. Physical data will be locked in a file drawer. Video and tape recordings may be used during the interview process, but the recordings will be

erased or deleted after the transcription of data. Notes and transcripts will not be associated with the participant by name, to preserve confidentiality.

Voluntary participation

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Blake Houston at The University of Southern Mississippi at 601.467.3809 or at blake.houston@eagles.usm.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Southern Miss Institutional Review Board at 601.266.5997.

Consent

**I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions.
I give my consent to participate in this study.**

Participant's signature _____ Date: _____

A copy of this consent form should be given to you.

APPENDIX G: IRB APPROVAL LETTER



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/research/institutional-review-board

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: **14050802**

PROJECT TITLE: **A Comparison of the Rhetorical Modes of Persuasion used by Churches in the Proselytization of Peoples of Lower Economic Status in South Mississippi**

PROJECT TYPE: **New Project**

RESEARCHER(S): **Blake Houston**

COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Arts and Letters**

DEPARTMENT: **Communication Studies**

FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: **N/A**

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: **Expedited Review Approval**

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: **05/19/2014 to 05/18/2015**

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board